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ABSTRACT

The Task Force on Career Planning and Placement in the University of Florida's College of Agriculture (COA) reviewed career planning and placement services available to COA students and made recommendations to define, expand, and improve the COA career planning and placement program. COA has a strong need for a comprehensive career planning and placement program, since small to medium-sized organizations that offer employment to COA students typically do not recruit on campus and COA students underuse Career Resource Center (CRC) services. The task force recommends these major program areas for the COA Career Planning and Placement Program: career planning, job search skills, experiential education programs, graduate and professional school opportunity development, and employer development. It recommends that a mechanism to provide more professional time to the CRC COA Liaison, a new half-time position related to career planning and placement, and continued CRC support of these priorities for the CRC COA Liaison: job search skills, employer development, and experiential education programs. The task force also recommends that the objectives and responsibilities of the Undergraduate Student Relations Council be clearly defined and understood so it may serve as the conduit for information between the placement coordinator, Academic Programs Office, academic units, and students. (Appendixes include information on the Gator Resume Action Disk and job search strategies for COA students.) (YLB)

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Academic Programs
Publication Series Number 20

Report of the

Task Force on Career Planning and Placement

College of Agriculture
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences
University of Florida
Gainesville, Florida 32611

September 1995

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Report of the Task Force on Career Planning and Placement

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Report of the Task Force on Career Planning and Placement

INTRODUCTION

The College of Agriculture (COA)[1] Task Force on Career Planning and Placement was formed in February, 1995 by Larry J. Connor, Dean of the COA, and Dr. Wayne Wallace, Director for the Career Resource Center, to review career planning and placement services available to COA students and make recommendations to further define, expand, and improve the COA career planning and placement program.

Career planning is a developmental process beginning long before students enter the job market. Providing prospective students with career information goes hand-in-hand with assisting students in choosing an academic program and a major. Therefore, career planning for COA students plays an important role in the college recruitment process. Dissemination of information on majors and potential careers is an important starting point in the career development process for many COA students.

Research shows that students lack career information pertinent to food, agriculture, natural resources, and related sciences. In fact, the lack of career information has been identified as a significant deterrent to enrollment in COA academic programs. This lack of information is closely tied to students' perceptions of agriculture, which are frequently stereotypical and not representative of the diversity in food, agriculture, natural resources, and related industries.

Characteristics often shared by COA students indicate their career planning needs may differ from students in other types of programs. More than fifty percent of COA students transfer from community colleges compared to the University of Florida average of twenty percent. Community college transfer students are more frequently non-traditional students than students starting at four-year institutions as freshmen. The majority of students in community college programs are first generation college students, meaning they do not have parental guidance during the college-to-career process. As the COA articulates with more community college programs, this issue will become increasingly relevant. It is necessary for the COA to provide their students with the means to effectively utilize career information to help them achieve their goals.

Job search skills and employment assistance services include assisting students in the development of skills which will aid them in identifying potential employers and in cultivating effective interview, correspondence, job negotiation, and job selection skills. COA students must also be provided with opportunities for experiential education, including internships, which not only assist in the career decision-making process, but also provide students with experience that is highly valued by employers. Within this realm falls the movement of COA students from undergraduate to graduate programs which is also an important element of the career decision-making process. Finally, the development and maintenance of a prospective employer base is necessary for a successful career development plan for COA students.

The COA is different from other colleges in that COA faculty have greater interactions and contacts with employers within the state compared to other colleges. Moreover, a larger percentage of COA graduates remain within Florida for employment and COA students have a more applied, pragmatic, and practical view of education. Most view education as a means to obtain a career or to prepare for graduate or professional school. Consequently, career planning and placement needs of the COA differ from other colleges.

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[1] The College of Agriculture includes all academic units within the Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences and the School of Forest Resources and Conservation

Report of the Task Force on Career Planning and Placement

DEFINITIONS

Career Resource Center (CRC). The CRC, located in B-1 and G-1 of the J. Wayne Reitz Union, is a comprehensive career center which offers guidance in all areas of career planning including career development, experiential education, and employer services to all University of Florida students. Its mission is to teach students, through appropriate programs, how to become active participants in their own continuing development. This includes offering students (and, where appropriate, alumni) a broad range of assistance designed to culminate in the best opportunity for employment on completion of their academic training.

COA. College of Agriculture.

Career Resource Center/College of Agriculture Liaison. The CRC has appointed a career center professional to be a liaison to each college at the University of Florida. The purpose of the liaison to the College of Agriculture (COA) is to provide a link between COA students and the CRC focusing on career development, work experience opportunities, and employment assistance. The liaison also works to coordinate employment opportunities with the food, agricultural, natural resources, and related employers and students. Finally, the COA Liaison works with the COA faculty to provide career outreach programs to classes and student organizations.

Placement. The word placement causes concern for many in the career planning and recruitment profession. Placement implies that the CRC is responsible for placing all students into permanent employment positions. For the purpose of this document, placement means "employment assistance." Employment assistance involves providing students with a realistic view of the world of work and the ability and resources to assess their own strengths, weaknesses, desires, and goals to help them plan and implement their job search processes.

COA CAREER PLANNING AND PLACEMENT PROGRAM NEEDS

The Task Force recommendations are based on needs that exist in the College of Agriculture and current career planning and placement program limitations, as indicated below:

- COA students are a distinct population, as described in the preceding section and, as such, have specific career planning and placement needs. Each COA academic major is a unique program and is closely linked with related career fields.

- The COA's philosophy includes working closely with COA students throughout their academic experience and following their graduation. This philosophy should be extended to the career planning and placement programs within the college.

- The faculty maintain close relationships with employers, academically-related careers, and obtaining permanent employment. It is essential that these successful activities continue while being incorporated into a centralized program.

- Employment opportunities in food, agricultural, natural resources, and related areas tend to be found in small to medium-sized organizations, and these types of organization typically do not recruit on-campus. Additionally, placements often occur based on word-of-mouth referrals. Strategies to develop and maintain these employment opportunities must continue.

- The CRC provides career development, experiential education, and employment assistance programs for all students at the University of Florida. These services continue to be under-utilized by COA students. Each college is assigned a liaison from the CRC to provide tailored career services to its students. The liaison to the College of Agriculture maintains an office in the college, as well as in the CRC, and provides at least ten hours a week of career planning and placement services. This relationship has been very successful; however, the COA has career planning and placement needs that extend beyond this time commitment.

It is clear that the COA has a strong need for a comprehensive career planning and placement program. The recommendations that follow will address these needs.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

The following are some essential concepts to consider as the COA further develops the career planning and placement aspects of academic programs:

- The COA may be viewed as a "manufacturer" and the CRC and the COA faculty as "retailers" through which buyers may purchase products. If the consumer (that is an employer) gets better service from one retail outlet, (s)he will return to that place to fulfill needs in the future.

- To survive in today's economic environment, career planning and placement personnel must adopt a business-like approach. To be successful, the COA and CRC must consider the needs of clients (or customers) as top priority.

- The marketing process is involved in bringing potential employers and employees together. Employers are the ultimate consumer of our products. We cannot wait for them to find us; rather, we must make our program a preferred shopping environment for employers. We must be aggressive in identifying potential employers and bring them to campus for internships and job interviews.

- Career planning and placement is not separate from academic programs; it is a part of academic programs; a focal point of a student's college years. When done effectively and correctly, career guidance and counseling is provided to students throughout their academic career by faculty, staff, and administrators. Emphasis should be placed on providing maximum options for students.

- We must have a friendly, helpful faculty and professional staff, conveniently located, and available, to meet the needs of potential employers by bringing potential employers and employees to the interview process in an efficient and timely manner.

TASK FORCE CHARGE

The charge given to the Task Force on Career Planning and Placement for the COA was to develop a comprehensive career planning and placement plan for the COA for present and future needs. This plan should include all aspects of career planning and placement as might be executed by individual academic units, the Office of Academic Programs, and the Career Resource Center. The plan will guide future programming for a rapidly expanding student body.

MAJOR PROGRAM AREAS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the major program areas for the COA Career Planning and Placement Program consist of: career planning, job search skills, experiential education programs, graduate and professional school opportunity development, and employer development.

Career Planning. This encompasses skill development and enhancement in identifying and understanding careers, educational and life decision-making processes, goal setting, and transitioning into different life phases such as high school to college and college to a career. This program area includes students developing the following:

- The ability to conduct personal assessments and associate these assessments with career options and opportunities.
- The ability to effectively access and utilize career information and explore and research a variety of career options.
- The ability to utilize effective decision-making strategies to narrow and choose among career options and subsequently implement effective educational and career planning and goal-setting strategies.
- The ability to accomplish goals, transition into new roles, and re-evaluate decisions.

We recommend that students who are undecided about their major or career field and students seeking to change majors or career fields be:

- Referred for career counseling and assistance with choosing or changing academic majors.
- Referred to COA undergraduate advisers for information regarding majors and career opportunities related to majors and that students be encouraged to explore additional options through the CRC Library, Agricultural and Natural Resources Career Fair, and professional networking for the identification of potential employers for a particular major and/or career interest.
- Referred for help with changing or selecting academic majors within the COA. Refeerrals should be made to the Office of the Assistant Dean for Undergraduate Academic Programs, undergraduate coordinators, the CRC COA Liaison, and/or other appropriate personnel.

It is further recommended that:

- COA advisers and undergraduate coordinators be provided with CRC program information, procedures, and key contact persons in order to make appropriate student referrals.
- Freshmen and prospective COA students be informed of career and graduate and professional school opportunities available to students in COA majors and the career planning and placement services available to students.

- A student handbook be developed and a copy provided to each COA student. A section on selection of majors, career planning, and placement should be included.

- A career listing of recent COA graduates and a graduate and professional schools listing where recent COA graduates are attending be developed. These data, as well as occupational demand data, should be developed for each COA major and incorporated into the Viewbook and the Occupational Outlook Handbook.

- Speakers (including alumni, faculty, extension faculty, CRC representatives, and employers) should be identified and used to present career related programs for COA students.

- An appropriate person be assigned the primary responsibility for career planning and placement activities within each academic unit.

- An appropriate person or persons be assigned the primary responsibility for career planning and placement activities at the COA level.

- Students classified as 1 or 2 LS, AG, or FY who indicate a major in the COA should be written a letter and informed of the career planning and placement services provided for COA students.

- Every junior student in the COA should be written a letter, encouraging them to participate in career planning and placement functions offered by the COA and CRC, to register with the CRC, and attend seminars sponsored by the COA and CRC.

- A letter be written to every senior student in the COA explaining career placement services provided and the importance of registering with the CRC.

- Continue to conduct an annual survey of graduates to determine their current employment status, major, job title, current working address, work telephone number, and starting salary.

- Develop a listing of typical employers of graduates by major and their starting salaries.

Job Search Skills. This area encompasses skill development and enhancement of career and employer identification and conducting effective job searches. We recommend the following:

- Seminars be presented to COA students related to job search skills, including identification of potential employers.

- Students develop effective employability skills, including interviewing, résumé and correspondence preparation, negotiating, and career selection. This should be done in classes, seminars, and individual consultations with staff and faculty.

- Mechanisms be developed to use COA alumni to identify externships (job shadowing program), internship, and career opportunities for COA students and involve alumni in career planning and placement activities.

- COA students be provided employer literature, directories, and occupational information.

- Students be made aware of the valuable career-related experience they gain through laboratories, class projects, "hands on" classes, internships, and related activities.

- Students be encouraged to purchase and complete a Gator Resume Action Disk (G.R.A.D.) and register with FirstPlace, the new CRC registration system. This system enables students to create their own personal, professional-looking résumé and to participate in on-campus interviews, co-ops, internship programs, and the résumé referral service. For more information, see Appendix A.

- Appropriate COA career planning and placement person(s) meet with every academic unit club within the COA on an annual basis to establish contact with students and faculty and to promote career planning and placement activities, particularly as they relate to securing employment.

- Appropriate COA career planning and placement person(s) communicate with students through workshops and seminars and instruct students on how to conduct a job search, write professional letters and résumé, develop successful interviewing abilities, and effectively employ and utilize career search skills to secure employment.

- Career and placement information be included in all College of Agriculture informational and recruitment materials.

Experiential Education Programs. This area encompasses substantive career-related work experience, including cooperative education, internships, and externships (job shadowing) programs. We recommend the following:

- Expand internship, cooperative education, and externship opportunities for COA students.

- Encourage students to complete an experiential educational experience prior to graduation by making students and make students aware of opportunities and the importance of participating in experiential educational programs

- Provide students career-related experiences through laboratories, class projects, and "hands on" classes and discuss the relevance and importance of these experiences to potential careers.

Graduate and Professional School Opportunity Development. This area encompasses development and enhancement in educational decision-making and planning as it relates to graduate and professional school. We recommend the following:

- Conduct seminars and other activities to encourage students to consider graduate and professional school as an option early in their academic careers.

- Write letters to potential graduate and professional school students informing them of graduate and professional school opportunities and encourage them to attend the seminars listed above.

- Develop the ability of COA students to effectively determine if graduate or professional school is necessary or desirable for their career goals.

- Provide current, accurate information on graduate and professional school programs.

- Develop the ability of COA students to plan and prepare for graduate or professional school, research graduate and professional programs of study and schools, select the best schools and programs, and apply for admission.

Employer Development. This area includes development and enhancement of employment opportunities for COA students. We recommend the following:

- Establish a systematic program of mail, telephone, and personal solicitation of potential employers to identify job opportunities appropriate to the employment needs of COA students.

- Utilize the COA's faculty, staff, alumni, students, and others to obtain current information about part-time, summer, internship, and career job openings for COA students.

- Develop, maintain, and publicize listings of employer contacts for COA students to access for employment opportunities.

- Develop promotional materials for employers which include listing the educational backgrounds of persons the COA can provide and policies and procedures used in referring students to employers for jobs.

- Assign appropriate persons with the primary responsibility for employer development at the COA and academic unit levels.

- Develop an employer database in each academic unit to use in soliciting career opportunities for students and employers to participate in the Agricultural and Natural Resources Career Day.

- Expand the Agricultural and Natural Resources Career Day to involve more potential employers and students. Emphasis should be placed on obtaining a broader array of employers, representing all the disciplines within the COA.

- Coordinate employer interview schedules, identify students for interviews, and refer qualified students through the FirstPlace database.

- Develop a newsletter to publicize job openings to students and place the job listings on a computer database so that students can access it through the IFAS VAX System or similar programs.

- Standardize job opportunity announcements into a standard format to include a major, job title, and employment requirements for each job and keep those in a central file location as well as dispersing them to students and academic units.

PERSONNEL RECOMMENDATIONS

The following additional recommendations, not directly related to any of the preceding program areas, are made by the Task Force:

- Currently, the CRC COA Liaison is a part-time position funded by the CRC. The CRC COA Liaison spends part-time working for the COA, with the remainder of the time spent in the CRC. The liaison's responsibilities are many and varied, including career planning, job search skills, experiential education programs, and employer development. The Task Force recommends that a mechanism be developed to provide more professional time, particularly in the areas of job search skills, experiential education programs, graduate and professional school development, and employer development so that career planning and placement responsibilities can more fully be met. We recommend that an additional person be employed with approximately fifty percent of his/her time devoted to career planning and placement.

- If the recommendations of this Task Force regarding hiring a new half-time position related to career planning and placement is accepted, then the Dean of the COA, Director of the CRC, staff members involved, and other appropriate individuals should identify, define, and clarify the specific responsibilities and duties of each position; i.e., the CRC COA Liaison and the COA Career Planning and Placement person. Coordination and collaboration is essential. This Task Force Report should serve as the basis to make decisions regarding the delegation of responsibilities.

- It is recommended that the CRC continue to support the CRC COA Liaison position with at least ten hours per week assigned to CRC COA Liaison activities and duties.

In the meantime, the Task Force recommends that the CRC continue to support the following priorities for the CRC COA Liaison:

- Job Search Skills -- including the development of effective résumé and job search correspondence preparation, interviewing, job selection, and securing a job.

- Employer Development -- including developing current information about career-related part-time, summer, and permanent job openings for COA students and developing promotional materials for potential employers detailing the diversity of educational programs in the COA. This also includes planning and organizing the Agriculture and Natural Resources Career Day.

- Experiential education programs -- including expansion of internships and cooperative education programs and the development of job-shadowing (externship) programs.

- The Task Force recommends that the CRC COA Liaison responsibilities in the areas of career planning and graduate and professional school planning be de-emphasized until such time as additional personnel are assigned to career planning and placement in the COA. Referrals should be made to the Career Development Team in the CRC.

UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT RELATIONS COUNCIL RECOMMENDATIONS

The Undergraduate Student Relations Council (USRC) was formed based on the recommendation of the Task Force on Undergraduate Curricula Development. The Council is comprised of recruitment/placement coordinators for each major. Each semester, the Council meets with the recruitment coordinator and the CRC COA Liaison for the purpose of further developing recruitment and placement strategies and activities in line with the changing needs of the COA.

Increasing enrollment creates new demands for an effective career development and placement program. As the college adapts to serving larger numbers of students, there is a greater necessity for a coordinated, efficient method of addressing students' career needs. The USRC is in an ideal position to serve as the conduit for information between the placement coordinator, the Academic Programs Office, academic units, and, ultimately, the students. However, for the Council to be an effective tool, its objectives and responsibilities must be clearly defined and understood.

The following recommendations are made:

- Each major should continue to have a placement coordinator who will represent that major on the USRC. This role should not automatically fall to the undergraduate coordinator, although in some cases this may be appropriate. Instead, the placement coordinator assignment should be viewed as one which carries separate responsibilities. It is recommended that the placement coordinator also serve as recruitment coordinator.

- The Dean of the COA should periodically request academic unit administrators to appoint a placement coordinator (preferable for a three-year term).

- Placement coordinators should be assigned to the USRC for a specific period of time (e.g., three years).

- The USRC should meet at least each semester to provide continuity and a greater opportunity for the exchange of ideas and development of strategies.

- Minutes should be kept for each meeting and distributed to Council members, undergraduate coordinators, and deans.

- Placement coordinators should play an active role in the planning of the Agricultural and Natural Resources Career Day, including identifying and contacting prospective employers, informing students, and encouraging student participation.

- Placement coordinators should serve as the contact persons for career planning and placement and assume responsibility for disseminating information concerning jobs, internships, and workshops to other faculty and students within their academic units.

- Placement coordinators should assist in developing an information package which accurately reflects the job market and the needs of employers.

APPENDIX A

THE G.R.A.D. SYSTEM

THE G.R.A.D. SYSTEM

1. What is G.R.A.D.?

   It is the registration package for the CRC. G.R.A.D. = Gator Resume Action Disk

2. Why do you need G.R.A.D?

   G.R.A.D. is required only if you want to participate in on-campus interviews, Co-op programs, internships, and resume referral services. All other CRC services do not require G.R.A.D.

3. What can G.R.A.D. do for me?

   G.R.A.D. is a comprehensive package for registering with CRC, accessing on-campus interviews and resume referral service, and creating your own personalized, professional resume.

4. What will it cost me?

   There is a small fee of $15.00 for the G.R.A.D. disk. (Cash or checks only)

5. How do I register with the CRC?

   - Purchase a G.R.A.D. disk at the Student Services Counter in B-1 Reitz Union.
   - Complete the G.R.A.D. demographics/registration and Resume sections using an IBM PC or compatible computer with a 3.5-inch disk drive.
   - Include a "PASSNUM" (PIN number on Sign-up, Walk-Up) on the Accessory Screen. Your PASSNUM is required for signing up for on-campus interviews.
   - Take your completed disk and signed Authorization (Pink) Card to B-1 Reitz Union to have your disk downloaded onto the CRC database and validated.

6. What happens if my G.R.A.D. disk information changes?

   You may update the information at any time but at least once each semester. Take an updated disk to B-1 Reitz Union to be re-downloaded onto the CRC database. At the Accessory Screen, indicate "Interview Times" available for scheduling interview appointments.

7. What about on-campus interviews?

   Sign up! Walk-up is a whole new way of securing interviews. You use the PC's at the CRC to request and schedule interview appointments directly with employers on-line. This requires the use of your social security and PIN numbers to access the system.

8. How can I get my resume referred to employers?

   By using the Resume Referral Service, you are automatically linked into this service when you register with the CRC. Employers will contact you directly.

9. Is there another way I can find out about employers and jobs?

   Yes, by using Gator Job Line. A handout on this service is available in B-1 Reitz Union.

G.R.A.D.	G.R.A.D. PROFESSIONAL
$15.00	$25.00
Registered with CRC for interviews	Registered with CRC for interviews
Three resume layouts from which to choose	Three resume layouts from which to choose
Three sample resumes	Nine sample resumes
Stores one resume	Stores up to five different resumes
	Can copy sections from one resume to another
	Interview Organizer Stores information on employers Calendar to keep track of follow-up interviews Job search calendar Report of upcoming events
	Letter Writing Program Customizes letters (17 different formats) Mail merge option

APPENDIX B

JOB SEARCH STRATEGIES FOR STUDENTS FROM THE COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE

JOB SEARCH STRATEGIES FOR STUDENTS FROM THE COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE

Students go or are referred to the CRC, B-1 Reitz Union where they begin their job search at the Student Services counter. Students are referred to a variety of programs and services depending on where they are in the job search process. Students are given a number of options including:

1. Students can be directly referred to the G.R.A.D. counter to purchase a G.R.A.D. disk which enables them to register with the CRC for mail-outs and direct contact about job opportunities, participate in On-Campus Interviewing, and obtain employment referrals. G.R.A.D disks are downloaded into the CRC FirstPlace System and can be updated.

   - Students should review the On-Campus Interviewing Bulletin weekly during the interviewing season. Students use the Walk-up/Sign-up Module to review details about companies interviewing on campus for which they are eligible and to schedule interviews through this module. If students are ineligible for an interview but still want to interview with a company, they will be referred to the COA AG Liaison for an exception to the schedule criteria and permission to sign up for an interview. The Call-up Module is an automated system that electronically contacts students about open schedules. Students' resumes are automatically generated by the FirstPlace System for pre-selection by employers and for employer interview packets on the day of the interview.

   - Students can be referred electronically to companies with employment openings upon a company's request. Typically, these are companies who do not interview on-campus. Students' resumes are selected on the basis of academic major, career interest, geographical location, preferences, and other criteria as determined by the company and the CRC staff member. Students are contacted by the employer if they are selected for interviews.

2. All University of Florida students are eligible to use Gator Jobline, an automated telephone jobline that contains current full-time, co-op, internship, campus, and part-time positions, which is available twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. A flyer is distributed at the Student Services counter and a password for the system is provided at that time.

3. Students may be referred to a series of workshops on the Job Search process available from the CRC throughout the semester. These workshops include Resume Writing, Interview Skills, and Job Search Techniques.

4. Students amy utilize the CRC Library resources including directories, immediate job openings, job search techniques, and employer literature.

5. Students are encouraged to attend any or all of the eight annual career fairs sponsored by the CRC including the Agriculture and Natural Resources Career Day. These career fairs provide students the chance to network with employers and find out about career opportunities. The annual statewide job fair is also open to all University of Florida students as a way to network and meet employers.

6. Students may set up an Individual Career Advising appointment with anyone in the CRC or specifically with the CRC COA Liaison depending on their needs or issues.

These are just a few options for students to consider and maximize the resources in the CRC. There is no one set way students conduct their job searches, it depends on individual needs and experiences. The key is for students to start early (at least one semester before they graduate) to take full advantage of all the resources available including the CRC, faculty, main libraries, professional associations, etc.